

Message Text

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ACTION PM-03

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FM AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1607

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

S E C R E T TRIPOLI 1105

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR MASS LY UR

SUBJECT: MIG-23'S FOR LIBYA

1. PAKISTAN AMBASSADOR GUL TOLD CHARGE HE HEARD FROM GOOD SOURCE THAT LARG HAS CONCLUDED CONTRACT WITH USSR FOR PURCHASE OF FIFTY MIG-23 PLANES. SOURCE MAY WELL HAVE BEEN LIBYAN AIR FORCE COMMANDER LT. COL. FARJANI WITH WHOM PAKISTANI MILITARY PILOTS AND AMBASSADOR, HIMSELF A RETIRED ARMY LT. GENERAL, HAVE REGULAR CONTACT.

2. OCCASIONAL, AND SOMETIMES CONTRADICTIONARY, REPORTS ON MIG-23'S CIRCULATE HERE, AND IN THIS INSTANCE AMBASSADOR ASKED IF WE HAD ANY CONFIRMATION. OTHER SOURCES OF SUCH REPORTS, E.G. FRENCH AIR FORCE OFFICER ON FRENCH EMBASSY STAFF AND REPRESENTATIVES OF PAGE AND LOCKHEED COMPANIES, ARE GENERALLY NOT AS DISINTERESTED AS PAKISTANI ADVISERS. AS RESULT, LATTER SEEM MORE LIKELY TO GET STRAIGHT STORY FROM LIBYAN MILITARY AUTHORITIES.

3. ALL OBSERVERS HERE AGREE IT IS ILLOGICAL FOR LIBYANS TO THINK FOR A MOMENT OF MIG-23'S WHEN THEY COULD NEVER HOPE TO DEVELOP TECHNICAL CAPACITY TO OPERATE THESE SOPHISTICATED MACHINES BEFORE LATTER COMPLETELY DETERIORATED IN THEIR HANGARS. HOWEVER, WHEN ONE CONSIDERS FRAME OF

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MIND AND ABUNDANT WEALTH OF ALLEGED BUYER--QADHAFI--

TRANSACTION DOES NOT SEEM ENTIRELY IMPLAUSIBLE.

4. QADHAFI THINKS DEEPLY ABOUT THE FUTURE. HE FORMS FIRM OPINIONS AND OUTSIZE GOALS AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, TRIES TO WORK TOWARD THEM. HE IS CONVINCED THERE MUST AND WILL BE ANOTHER ARAB-ISRAELI WAR AND IS PROCEEDING WITH HIS USUAL SINGLEMINDED PURPOSE TO PREPARE FOR THAT EVENTUALITY. WE THINK THAT QADHAFI ALSO ENVISAGES SUPPLYING OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES FROM LIBYAN ARSENAL AT TIME OF FUTURE CRISIS. MIG-23 COULD BE LIKELY ITEM FOR TRANSFER. STEIN

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